



Like it or not, our newcomer coyotes are here to stay. In other parts of our country, they have been shot on sight, trapped, hunted from helicopters, and poisoned. In spite of all the human efforts to control their numbers, the coyote has flourished.

A Native-American legend states that the coyote will be the last animal left on the earth. We need to respect their ability to control mice and other rodents and recognize that they have an important place in maintaining the balance of nature.

We should also make sure that we avoid any practices which may attract coyotes to our campgrounds and park areas. **Avoid leaving pet food outside and do not throw food scraps into the woods or onto the ground.** Poor practices such as these can attract mice and other small animals, and subsequently, the coyote.



FRONT



HIND

Ten Fast Facts About the Coyote

1. Coyotes can run 40 miles per hour.
2. An 8 foot high fence can be easily leaped over by a coyote.
3. Coyotes sometimes use their great stamina to chase prey for long distances, striking swiftly when the prey is exhausted.
4. Pups keep their eyes closed for 14 days after being born.
5. Coyotes are carriers of rabies and distemper.
6. Coyotes will cross-breed with dogs and wolves.
7. Only 5-20% of coyote pups survive past one year of age.
8. The coyote does not hibernate and is primarily a carnivore (meat-eater).
9. The coyote's Latin name, *Canis latrans*, means "barking dog".
10. The jackals of Asia, Africa, and Europe are cousins of our coyote.

Coyote: The Newcomer

Philpott Lake



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The coyote is a relative newcomer to the Philpott Lake area. The coyote primarily ranged in the Northwest, however, it has steadily increased its range and is now found from Alaska to New England and south through Mexico. Contrary to some local belief, the coyote was not introduced to our area to control the deer population. Being very concerned about predation to game animals such as deer, turkeys, small game birds, and rabbits and to domestic animals and livestock, the coyote is not protected by any Virginia game laws. Some counties have even placed a bounty on the coyote. Coyotes are members of the dog family. They can weigh up to 50 pounds. They vary in color depending on their location. In the Philpott area, coyotes are usually a brownish yellow to a reddish gray. Their legs are usually a rusty color with black lines. Their stomach is mostly white. Most often, the tail will have a black tip. In the winter, the coyote's pelt is thick and silky and is of some value to trappers and the fur industry. The coyote typically walks with its tail straight and carried below the level of its back. The tail can be "bushed out" when the coyote displays aggression. Several different vocalizations are made by the coyote.

Howling is most often heard at night. Many times the howls are accompanied by short "yips". Howls are used to keep in touch with other coyotes in the area. It is common to hear a coyote howl from a mountain ridge and then hear an answer from a different, distant ridge. If several coyotes are in the area, a chorus of howling will soon be heard, as all the coyotes begin to answer each other. Coyotes also bark and huff. Huffing is a quieter sound used to call their young without creating attention from other nearby creatures.



The coyote has excellent vision and very acute senses of hearing and smell. Its nose is used to detect the scent of another coyote which has marked its territory with urine and also to sniff out prey for food. The coyote's highly developed sense of hearing allows it to locate prey and to detect impending danger. The position of the coyote's ears shows its mood and rank of dominance when with other coyotes.

The coyote is one of the most adaptable animals in the world. It can change any learned habit, its diet intake, and its social life to survive in any habitat. Coyotes will even frequent home sites and cities if they can obtain food.

Dens will usually be dug by the coyote. Coyotes will sleep in the dens and use the dens to give birth to their young. Dens of other animals will, on occasion, be taken over and modified to suit the coyote's needs.



A female coyote will have one litter each year, ranging in size from 3 to 9 pups. A coyote, like most other dogs, is active both during the day and night. It uses its keen senses and great speed to easily catch its food. Coyotes eat a variety of food, including meat (fresh or spoiled), fish, and even fruit and vegetable material. Although they usually prey on small rodents, coyotes have been known to kill poultry, sheep, and other livestock. In the Philpott area, their diet consists mainly of rabbits, chipmunks, mice, lizards, snakes, insects and wild berries. The coyote usually hunts alone, however, they may form a pack to kill a larger animal, such as a young deer. Housecats and small dogs have frequently fallen victim to coyotes inhabiting suburbs and areas with high human populations. In rare instances, they have attacked small children.